

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask further consent that at 3 p.m. on Monday, January 24, the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of Calendar No. 1, Carlos Gutierrez, to be Secretary of Commerce; provided further that there be 2 hours of debate on the nomination, 1 hour under the control of Chairman STEVENS and 1 hour under the control of Senator DORGAN; further, that at the conclusion of that time, the Senate proceed to a vote on the confirmation of the nomination, with no intervening action or debate.

Finally, I ask that the President then be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that today, following the confirmation of the Spellings nomination, the Senate proceed to the confirmation of Condoleezza Rice to be Secretary of State; provided further that there be 2 hours of debate equally divided in the usual form, and that following that debate the Senate proceed to a vote on the confirmation of the nomination with no intervening action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, we have Senators who have been engaged in matters relating to what is going on around the world who, for the confirmation of the Secretary of State, wish to be able to speak. We have squeezed the time in as closely as we could, and we have 4½ hours we need on our side. This has been explained to the Republican leadership.

We would, of course, be willing to move forward on that tonight and tomorrow, but there are the inaugural festivities, and we all understand that. It certainly does not seem untoward in any way that the Senators have some time to speak before this most important nomination, and I say as a matter of passing, at the White House today I had a fine conversation with Condoleezza Rice, and she said her main goal was to make sure she was confirmed by the time the President gave his State of the Union speech because she had a trip scheduled to go overseas after that. This confirmation will take place, at the latest, sometime Wednesday. So she will be able to make that with a lot of time to spare. So I object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The objection is heard.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, some of us were just at a luncheon where I had a chance to speak with the current Secretary of State who is anxious to get back to tinkering with his cars. So he will note that objection with some regret.

As I indicated, we anticipated an objection. Senator REID had indicated

there would be a problem on that side for any amount of debate we would have today or tomorrow, so therefore I ask that on Tuesday, January 25, at a time determined by the majority leader, after consultation with the Democratic leader, the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of the Rice nomination; provided further that during Tuesday's session there be 9 hours of debate equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

I further ask consent that when the Senate resumes the nomination on Wednesday, January 26, there be an additional 40 minutes of closing remarks equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

Finally, I ask that following that debate, the Senate proceed to a vote on the confirmation of the nomination with no intervening action or debate, and that after the vote the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. KENNEDY. Reserving the right to object, and I do not intend to object, I was wondering if my colleague from Massachusetts, Senator KERRY, has any time within that time?

Mr. REID. Mr. President, if I could, I ask the consent be modified to reflect the speakers for the Democrats at this time: Senator BYRD, 1 hour; Senator BOXER, 1 hour; Senator REED of Rhode Island, 30 minutes; Senator DURBIN, 30 minutes; Senator KERRY, 20 minutes; Senator LEVIN, 15 minutes; Senator KENNEDY, 15 minutes; Senator LIEBERMAN, 10 minutes; Senator CORZINE, 10 minutes; Senator SALAZAR, 10 minutes; Senator FEINSTEIN, 10 minutes.

I would say to all my colleagues, we have only 5 minutes left, so there would be no additional time but for the fact that Senator BOXER has indicated she likely will not use her whole hour. She is always most courteous with other Senators, and she will be happy to give some of that time on Tuesday to other Senators, if necessary.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. KENNEDY. I withdraw my reservation.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Does the acting majority whip modify that request?

Mr. REID. I ask to modify that request.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection to modifying the consent? Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Democratic leader.

Mr. REID. I apologize to the acting leader. Senator BIDEN has indicated he is going to get 20 minutes, but he is going to speak in favor of the nomination. He said he could get that from Senator LUGAR.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF MIKE JOHANNIS TO BE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will now go to executive session and proceed to the nomination of Mike Johanns.

The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Mike Johanns, of Nebraska, to be Secretary of Agriculture.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. I yield as much time as he may consume to my colleague from Kansas, the former chairman of the House Agriculture Committee under whom I served, my dear friend, PAT ROBERTS.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. I thank the distinguished chairman of the Agriculture Committee, and, I might add, the new chairman of the committee, for yielding this time to me. I look forward to working with him. On behalf of the man whose job it is to feed America in a troubled and hungry world, we could not have made a better choice—I am using the editorial "we"—for a man to lead the Senate Agriculture Committee. He brings to the job extensive experience and commitment to represent not only the producers of Georgia but those all throughout the Nation. So I thank the Chairman. I look forward to working with him.

I rise today to speak on the nomination of Governor Michael Johanns of Nebraska to serve as the next Secretary of Agriculture. But first I would like to thank our outgoing Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary Ann Veneman. Ann has been a longtime and dear personal friend of mine. While she now has accepted a new challenge as head of UNICEF; that is, the United Nations Children's Fund, I want to personally thank her for the 4 years of service she has given to this Nation. Her steadfastness on behalf of agriculture was inspiring to us all. So to Ann Veneman: A job well done.

Her legacy will be her commitment to trade and food and agricultural security, which is in the best interest of all Americans. On her watch she dealt

with some of the most difficult issues any Secretary could ever face: first, a threat of foot and mouth disease almost as soon as she took office, later followed by BSE issues and the introduction of something called Asian soybean rust, which is a very severe problem. She handled all of these problems well. And she also established a plant and animal disease monitoring system. Again, that will be her legacy.

I also wish Governor Johanns all the best as he becomes our new Secretary of Agriculture. It will not be an easy job, and he knows that. Secretary Johanns will be forced to confront many of the same issues Secretary Veneman faced. He will face food safety and security surprises that will make it all the more important to continue to protect the safety and security of our food supply and the agricultural sector.

He will also face challenges with regard to budget pressures, the farm bill reauthorization, and also continued competition—I want to emphasize this—if not an outright ambush to U.S. farm programs through the World Trade Organization. That is going to be a very big challenge to all of us.

Mike Johanns is up to and qualified for this task. I had the pleasure to visit at length with the Governor prior to his confirmation hearing. I attended the entire hearing. Actually, I had the gavel when we moved the nomination. Knowing the Governor from a neighboring State, I can tell you he has a passion for this job. He has committed to do well on behalf of our farmers, ranchers, food safety, and our nutrition programs.

The Department of Agriculture is an immense agency, and he is well qualified for this task. He was raised on a farm. He understands agriculture. Most important, he is someone who will be a bully pulpit champion, if you will, for production agriculture. He is the type who will certainly be willing to sit on the wagon tongue with the farmers and ranchers, asking for their advice and their suggestions.

I have heard many stories from the Kansas producers on the northern borders of Kansas who have told me of crossing the border to Nebraska, not for a football game but simply on business, walking into the local coffee shop, and there they would run into Governor Johanns and he would be carrying on the coffee shop conversations with his farmers. This is the kind of man we want in this position.

President Bush has picked an outstanding candidate in nominating Mike Johanns, the former Governor of Nebraska. I look forward to working with him. I urge my colleagues to support the swift approval of his nomination.

I again thank the distinguished chairman and yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. I thank the Senator from Kansas for his very kind comments and also for his support of

the nomination of Governor Johanns. I, of course, rise to support that nomination by the President of the United States of Governor Michael Johanns of Nebraska to serve as Secretary of Agriculture.

I, too, want to first thank our outgoing Secretary, Ann Veneman, for the great job she has done. She has faced some very serious challenges over the last 4 years. I have continually pointed out to folks involved in agriculture, as I have spoken to groups around the country, the terrific job she personally as well as her Department did relative to the potential BSE issue that arose in the northwestern part of our country several months ago.

I thought it was a prime example of the difference in the way our system works, particularly under APHIS, which is an organization that does exactly what it is supposed to do, and that is to make sure animals are inspected in an appropriate way before they come into the United States, versus countries that simply do not have in place the mechanisms that we do to try to prohibit this very terrible disease from spreading among livestock. I thought Secretary Veneman herself, by engaging immediately on this issue, showed strong leadership. I believe it was because of that that this issue faded very quickly, as it should have.

Following September 11, we have had a continuing issue of food security. We have been very fortunate, but I believe it is more than that. It is a situation where we have had strong leadership in USDA, under Secretary Veneman, that has been on top of the issue of food safety. As a result of that strong leadership, we have not encountered a potential terrorist attack on our food system.

I compliment her for the great leadership she has shown. She was willing to come to my State early on in her tenure. Having grown up and been involved in a peach farm in California, she particularly appreciated coming to a peach farm in Georgia where, as I told her, we grow much sweeter peaches, but that is always for debate.

But she made herself very knowledgeable of southeastern agricultural issues, which are a little bit different from California issues. I appreciate her from that standpoint. We wish her well in her new endeavor, and I know she is going to be very successful there.

I want to say on behalf of Governor Johanns that he is extraordinarily well prepared and qualified for this new challenge which the President is giving him.

He grew up on a dairy farm in Iowa. He served two terms as mayor of Lincoln, NB, and he is in his second term as Governor of that State. He has shown outstanding leadership during his tenure as Governor, which will serve him well in managing the diverse and important activities of the Department of Agriculture. As leader of a major agricultural State, the Governor

is obviously familiar with the issues that are important to farmers and ranchers.

He has been a leader in the Western Governors Association on drought issues, and has led five trade missions to expand overseas markets for American agricultural products.

I want to emphasize that all of us who have been involved in agriculture, as I have from the legislative side for the last 10 years, know and understand that the future and survival of the American farmers is their ability to export the finest quality of agricultural products that are grown anywhere in the world. Those export markets are critical. Governor Johanns brings a particularly unique strength and perspective to that aspect of agriculture. I am very pleased about that fact.

He has also been a leader on other issues that are critical to the very diverse mission of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He has been a strong voice for rural economic development. He is a past chairman of the Governors Ethanol Coalition, and knows the potential of value-added agriculture. He serves as chairman of the Governors Biotechnology Partnership, and has fostered electronic government and technology applications in his State.

On January 6, Governor Johanns appeared for his nomination hearing before the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry which I have the privilege to chair. For nearly 3 hours he answered questions on a wide range of subjects, and made a clear and positive impression on members of the committee. His compassion and understanding of the issues was so evident that committee members voted to approve his nomination that same day by a unanimous vote of 20 to zero.

Today in his inauguration address, the President made a direct outreach to all Members of the Senate, and showed a willingness to cooperate in a bipartisan way to try to enact positive legislation in this body.

I am very proud of the fact that the committee which I chair in a very bipartisan fashion, including the Presiding Officer, voted out unanimously the nomination of Governor Johanns.

To my ranking member, TOM HARKIN, I appreciate his cooperation in this effort. He has been very forthright in his discussions with Governor Johanns, and he has also been very forthright and forceful in his support of Governor Johanns for this nomination.

I congratulate the President on his choice to lead the Department of Agriculture for the next 4 years.

I appreciate Governor Johanns' commitment to continue an outstanding record of public service, and I recommend to my colleagues that they all support his nomination.

At this time, I yield such time as he may consume to the Senator from Nebraska, Senator HAGEL.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, thank you.

I first offer my congratulations to the new chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee. We are pleased about Senator CHAMBLISS's new assignment and responsibilities. I very much appreciate his taking on these new responsibilities at a time that will be critical for American agriculture as we work our way toward the reform bill, as well as central issues that will face our country directly connected to American agriculture.

I rise this afternoon to add my congratulations to the President's nominee for Secretary of Agriculture, the Nebraska Governor, Mike Johanns. I have known Mike Johanns for many years. We have worked very closely over the last few years. He has ably served the State of Nebraska during a difficult time.

As the Agriculture Committee noted in its hearings for Governor Johanns, he is eminently qualified. His background is well known. He is prepared, and he will be a very effective Secretary.

I might add, one of the reasons many of us are so enthusiastic about Mike Johanns doing this job is that he understands not only American agriculture but he understands trade. He understands geopolitical strategic issues that are connected to our agriculture, our economy, and trade.

He understands that these great issues of our time are woven into the same fabric. They are within the great arc of national interest for America. He has the kind of stature and the kind of character that we never see enough of in Washington.

For those reasons, and for many others, I am enthusiastic, as are so many of us, about Mike Johanns taking on the job of Secretary of Agriculture.

We will miss him in Nebraska. His steady leadership has brought Nebraska through a difficult time of deficits, not unlike other States. He has performed not only well but he has built a value-added system not only in our economy but in our government in Nebraska. He will be succeeded by a very able Lieutenant Governor, Dave Heineman, whom we also wish well.

As I conclude, I add my thanks to Secretary Veneman's service to our country and to American agriculture over the last 4 years. She too has had to deal with many of the uncontrollables that are part of that portfolio—a difficult job. She deserves recognition for the kind of job she has done. She has done it just as Mike Johanns will do his job—with class, with dignity, always reaching out to others, as well as working closely with the Congress.

The last point I will make is whatever was said by the Senator from Kansas about Nebraska football is not to be taken seriously.

Other than that, I think my time is up. Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, we will not ask for bowl scores at this time.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, the position of Secretary of Agriculture, in my estimation, is one of the most important, yet too often unheralded, positions in the Federal Government. Good leadership by the Secretary is vitally important in my State of Iowa, where agriculture is critical to our economy and we treasure our way of life in small towns and rural communities. Yet no matter where one lives, we all depend on agriculture for food, fiber and, increasingly, for energy and other farm-based products. The day-to-day responsibilities of the Secretary of Agriculture truly touch the lives of every American as well as millions of others around the world.

It is my pleasure to congratulate Governor Michael Johanns of Nebraska on his confirmation to be the next Secretary of Agriculture. I have spoken with Governor Johanns in some depth on several occasions and believe he has the qualities and potential to be a very good Secretary. I might add, his Iowa pedigree is certainly a plus. I also thank and commend Secretary Ann Veneman, as she departs, for her good work and her cooperation and communication with me, as well as the same between our staffs, over the years.

As we look ahead to the next 4 years, there are many challenges and many opportunities ahead. We passed a good farm bill in 2002, President Bush praised it and signed it. For the most part it has been working, but too many of the key initiatives in that bill have suffered from misguided or delayed implementation. Yet even though we stayed within our budget in writing the farm bill, since then agriculture and farm bill funding has been very damagingly siphoned off. Those budget threats seem certain to intensify. The risks to food safety and security from bovine spongiform encephalopathy or other animal and plant diseases continue to make headlines. The new Secretary will have to deal with some very serious issues many of them very soon.

At the same time, we have some great opportunities in agriculture and the rural economy; that is, if only we will seize them. I am encouraged that Governor Johanns understands the importance of capitalizing on these opportunities, specifically value-added agriculture spanning the range from pork and beef to the great potential to produce energy and biobased products from farm fields across the country.

For instance, we adopted a provision in the farm bill to require all Federal departments and agencies to give a preference to procuring biobased products whenever feasible thus creating a huge potential market. While USDA has issued final rules to carry out this program, nothing will actually be purchased until a list of eligible products is published. I have urged Governor Johanns to move to implement this program fully and without further delay in order to begin realizing the economic and environmental benefits of this biobased initiative.

We also included a very robust conservation title in the 2002 farm bill, one that was touted by the president when he signed the bill into law. Unfortunately, many of those initiatives, including the Conservation Security Program, have been undermined by funding cuts and too-often poor execution. I have talked with Governor Johanns about these problems, and I am hopeful that we will work together to fulfill the promise of the farm bill and move forward on these important conservation initiatives so that farmers and ranchers have the tools they need to be the best stewards of the land they can be.

We also have a history of bipartisan cooperation to meet our responsibilities to alleviate hunger and malnutrition through Federal and international food and nutrition assistance. And increasingly, we face compelling challenges in improving diets and nutrition in order to promote healthier and longer lives.

Many other issues important to prosperity and quality of life in rural America must be addressed ranging from providing broadband access to boosting locally owned businesses and jobs to ensuring opportunities for family-size farms and independent producers.

I am optimistic that we can make real progress in addressing these and other challenges in food, agriculture and rural issues. I welcome Governor Johanns to Washington, congratulate him on his confirmation as the next Secretary of Agriculture and remind him that my door is always open.

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, the United States is blessed with an abundance of natural resources and cutting-edge technology that leads the world in agriculture. We all agree that the richest resource of American agriculture is its people—the farm and ranch families—whose efforts drive the productivity of our Agriculture industry for food, fiber and fuel.

American agriculture today is a complex business, very different from what it was even a decade ago. Adoption of modern technology, improved mechanization, and changing methods of production, marketing, and financing by energetic farmers and ranchers has changed the landscape of our rural areas. Our producers, diversified by size and enterprise, support an economic system that is, without doubt, the envy of the world.

It's critical to understand the diversity of American agriculture and how it influences our daily lives—whether we work or we don't work in agriculture or whether we live or we don't live on a farm. This is why I support the nomination of Nebraska Governor Mike Johanns to lead this agency that is responsible for the safety of meat, poultry and egg products, for opening new markets and reopening those currently closed to U.S. agricultural products, for providing food aid to those who have the need, for protecting soil,

water and wildlife, and for administering food nutrition programs.

Governor Johanns' qualifications to lead the Department of Agriculture are—at the core—his upbringing and his receptiveness to change and diversification—essential elements for an industry driven by ingenuity and fair competition.

Nebraska is a world-class leader in producing a high-quality, abundant, and affordable food supply. It leads the Nation in total red meat and dry bean production, and is a significant player in the production of alfalfa hay, corn, grain sorghum, soybeans, winter wheat, livestock, and popcorn.

Nearly 8 million acres of Nebraska's field crops benefit from irrigation, through approximately 24,000 miles of streams and rivers, reservoirs and aquifers. In recent years, the importance of maintaining water quality and quantity in times of severe drought conditions has added to the complexity of agricultural production. Mike Johanns has governed in these times of great uncertainty and is well aware of the continuing needs to deal with these most difficult times.

Governor Johanns presents a list of qualifications that will be of considerable benefit not only to Nebraska and the Midwest, but throughout the nation.

He is an experienced leader and a strong advocate with solid common sense solutions to the difficult questions presented to him. We've talked about the need for a bipartisan approach in this important job and I know he agrees how important that will be.

I look forward to continue working with Governor Johanns, as Secretary of Agriculture to improve drought monitoring and forecasting, to advance renewable fuels initiatives increasing the use of ethanol and biodiesel in our transportation fuels just to name a few. In addition, the opportunity to create new and innovative rural development programs and reverse the trend of out-migration from the smallest communities has never been more important. Today's nominee not only has the leadership experience but he also has the experience of having worked to develop such programs.

Governor Johanns and I have discussed and agree that it is important for the Secretary of Agriculture to work in a bipartisan manner with Congress. With a Farm Bill reauthorization effort nearing, I look forward to working cooperatively with him to develop a practical approach to our national agriculture policy that will support and promote our agriculture products and producers. The new Farm Bill should further the goals of consumer safety and confidence in our nation's food supply, without compromising the ability of our producers to compete—freely and fairly—in the global marketplace.

I was pleased to learn of the administration's selection of Mike Johanns as

the Secretary of Agriculture. I have said repeatedly, and believe thoroughly, the person who will administer the farm bill and build for the future of agriculture in America needs to be somebody with Midwestern agricultural experience. Governor Johanns has that kind of experience and that perspective and in my opinion will serve the administration and the country well.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, today the Senate is expected to confirm the nomination of Governor Michael Johanns of Nebraska to be the next Secretary of Agriculture.

As we vote on this nomination, we should all recognize just how important this position is to America's farmers and ranchers. Beyond that, the Secretary's responsibilities touch the lives of every American consumer as well as millions of people overseas. This is a point that is being made daily as we seek to provide the needed food aid and assistance to those who have suffered such terrible losses as a result of the recent tsunami.

There isn't any question that American agriculture faces significant challenges on many fronts. It is incumbent upon all of us to be the strongest advocates we can be for our producers and their communities. However, the Secretary of Agriculture is unique. The Secretary must provide national leadership and advocacy to promote a greater understanding of the important role our agricultural producers play in our own society and the world.

The Secretary's role must be more than just the spokesperson for the administration on agricultural issues. In fact, I believe that one of the most important responsibilities of this position is to be an advocate within the administration to ensure our producers, consumers and rural communities are not short-changed in the domestic and international policy and political processes.

Governor Johanns will have a very big job as we confront the pressures that are being placed on agriculture as a result of the budget deficit, weather related disasters, increased food safety and bio-terrorism concerns, environmental issues and opportunities related to agriculture, the economic development needs in rural America, and the level of insecurity that an increasing number of farmers, ranchers and rural main street businesses are feeling as a result of globalization.

I am hopeful our new Secretary of Agriculture will provide the leadership necessary to address these issues in a way that advances the interests of all agricultural sectors while enhancing the appreciation of Americans for our agricultural heritage.

Two weeks ago I supported the action of the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee to advance this nomination to the full Senate with a positive recommendation. Today I offer my support for the action the Senate is about to take in confirming

Governor Michael Johanns as our next Secretary of Agriculture.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the nomination of Governor Mike Johanns as the Secretary of Agriculture. As the Governor of Nebraska, and a fellow Midwesterner, Johanns has a strong background in agriculture and is well suited for the role of Secretary of Agriculture.

I was able to meet with Governor Johanns yesterday and I was very impressed with his view on the future of agriculture, food safety and rural issues. The next four years are going to be an important time as we face the reauthorization of the farm bill, food safety concerns, nutrition and trade.

Agriculture is important to my home State of Illinois. Illinois is one of our country's most important agricultural contributors. Illinois farm land, which accounts for about 28 million acres, is considered some of the most productive in the world. More than 76,000 farm families in the State produce corn, soybeans, wheat, beef, pork, dairy products, and specialty crops. Illinois is the number one soybean-producing State in the country and number two in corn. Illinois ranks second nationally in the export of agricultural commodities with nearly \$4 billion worth of goods shipped to other countries each year. The State's agribusiness activity is vibrant. From the Chicago area to Decatur and throughout Illinois, agricultural processing employs thousands of people. And researchers at the University of Illinois as well as at other institutions, continue to help provide answers to some of the most common as well as the most complex, agricultural questions we face.

Since Governor Johanns was the past chairman of the Governors' Ethanol Coalition, I know he sees the potential of value added agriculture. Adding values to commodities adds real promise for boosting farm income and jobs and economic growth in rural America. Illinois ranks second in the nation in corn production, with more than 1.5 billion bushels produced annually, and is the nation's leading source of clean-burning ethanol. Corn grown in Illinois is used to make 40% of the ethanol consumed in the United States. In Illinois, roughly one in every six rows of corn—approximately 280 million bushels—is the source for ethanol.

As the Secretary of Agriculture, Governor Johanns will face unprecedented challenges in protecting the safety and security of our food supply.

The recent discovery of two more cows with BSE, or "mad cow disease," in Canada reminds us that we cannot ignore the threat of BSE. We must shore up the firewalls that prevent BSE from spreading in this country, to give American consumers confidence that the beef they feed to their families is safe to eat.

We need a scientifically sound testing program that will tell us whether our BSE control efforts are working. A

surveillance program should include older cattle that appear healthy but that can still harbor BSE. Almost a year ago, USDA promised to include cattle in this population in its surveillance, but still hasn't started this testing.

We must stop feeding cows to other cows, the practice that is thought to have led to the spread of mad cow disease in Europe. We have had a feed ban in this country since 1997, but we need to close loopholes in the ban and redouble our efforts to make sure that the ban is being followed.

We must make sure that the parts of cattle that pose the highest risk of infection are being correctly and completely removed.

Our primary goal should be to protect the health of the public, and the health of the animal herds in the United States.

I look forward to working with Secretary-Designate Johanns to make sure our nation's BSE prevention and control program earns and deserves the public's confidence.

An issue I care deeply about is food safety. When HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson announced he was stepping down last month, he noted several items of unfinished business that the government must address. Among them, he mentioned the importance of improving the nation's food security.

Secretary Thompson said that he worries "every single night" about a massive attack on the U.S. food supply. Thompson said: "I, for the life of me, cannot understand why the terrorists have not, you know, attacked our food supply, because it is so easy to do."

If this is not a clear call to action, I don't know what is.

I hope to count on Secretary Johanns for support of legislation I plan to roll out in the next few weeks that will give the Agriculture Department and the Food and Drug Administration the tools they need to improve the security of our food supply.

My bill would give these agencies authority to oversee implementation of food security measures at food processing plants; give these agencies the same recall authority over food that agencies like the Consumer Product Safety Commission exercise over toys; and improve information coordination among the food safety agencies to diffuse potential threats to the food supply.

I also hope Secretary Johanns will be able to see beyond the bureaucratic morass that has developed at the agencies charged with the safety of our food and help us move towards making the vision of creating a single agency responsible for food safety a reality.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 76 million people suffer from food poisoning every year, with children and the elderly suffering a disproportionate amount of the most serious cases. We need, at the very least, to improve the coordination of the food agencies' oversight while

working towards the goal of developing a single food safety agency.

I would also hope that Johanns plans to play a key role in advising the administration on the appointment of a new food safety chief to replace the outgoing Elsa Murano at the Food Safety and Inspection Service. We need a person in this important position that has a commitment to food safety over other agricultural interests as the agency faces challenges including implementing a strategy to keep Mad Cow disease out of the country.

In my meeting with Governor Johanns I was pleased to hear him mention trade. As I mentioned before, Illinois ranks second nationally in the export of agricultural commodities with nearly \$4 billion worth of goods shipped to other countries each year. Japan has closed its markets to our beef for over a year. We must take a strong position to reopen this market. Our trading partners have got to be held accountable for dealing with our country in a straightforward way.

As the leader of a major agriculture state, Governor Johanns is familiar with issues of importance to farmers and ranchers. I will support his nomination as Secretary of Agriculture and look forward to working with him on issues facing the Department of Agriculture.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I will vote to confirm the nomination of Secretary-Designate Mike Johanns to serve our Nation as United States Department of Agriculture, USDA, Secretary. It is with no small obligation or minor imposition that this honor and responsibility fall upon Mr. Johanns, as he functions in his best capacity to fairly represent our varied and diverse regional issues in American agriculture. Our national agriculture sector is highly fractionalized as States seek to ensure representation for specific commodities and Farm Bill programs, and I am concerned, however optimistic, that Mr. Johanns will do his due diligence to ensure our South Dakotan and plains states interests are well represented at the Federal level and by USDA.

Of immediate concern is the current status of the beef industry. While USDA forges ahead with their final rule to allow the importation of live Canadian cattle and ruminant products, I am alarmed for the implications on our beef sector and our producers' ability to make the bottom line. I am concerned for the inaccessible export markets that continually seem less reachable with USDA's treatment of this issue. I am continually dismayed that USDA appears to place the interests of Canadian cattle producers above the interests of domestic producers, and I am hopeful that Mr. Johanns will place this issue at the forefront of his agenda while assuming his position as Secretary. I am hopeful that Mr. Johanns will listen to the voice of the American agricultural producer and recognize the immediacy and timeliness of the issue.

I am optimistic that Mr. Johanns will implement mandatory Country of Origin Labeling, COOL, which, while signed into law by this current President under this most recent farm Bill, has yet to be implemented. It is with increasing frustration that our producers await the benefits of this common sense program, and while it has been no secret that the administration is not favorable toward a mandatory food labeling program, I am hopeful that Mr. Johanns will honor the voice of Congress and of the American producer and move forward with the implementation process in a reasonable and honorable manner.

The business of agriculture is becoming increasingly challenging for our small farmers and producers. Market concentration and vertical integration, unreasonable contract obligations, maintaining and developing export markets to garner a fair commodity price, and a serious disconnect between urban and rural America are driving our smaller farmers out of business on a daily basis. It is with no small sense of urgency that I emphasize the need to address these issues. I am hopeful, that as promised, Mr. Johanns will maintain an open door policy for members of Congress to discuss these issues and arrive at reasonable policy solutions that are valuable and substantive for the agriculture producer, in South Dakota and across America.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, as the U.S. Congress begins its 109th session, the Senate is performing its constitutional duty of providing its advice and consent on the President's nominees for cabinet positions.

I take the Senate's responsibility to evaluate Presidential nominations very seriously. The process is important to ensuring strong leadership at the very highest levels of the federal government. It also provides an opportunity for Senators to have focused discussions with nominees on issues of particular importance to their respective constituencies.

Today the Senate will confirm several nominees, including the nomination of Nebraska Governor Mike Johanns, the President's selection to succeed Secretary Veneman at the Department of Agriculture.

While I am not a member of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, I am confident that Chairman CHAMBLISS, ranking member HARKIN and the rest of the committee's members conducted a thorough examination of Governor Johanns' record. I will support the committee's recommendation and vote in favor of his nomination.

That being said, I have come to the floor today to express my thoughts on two specific agricultural issues that are important to Washington state's renowned beef industry: mad cow disease and country of origin labeling.

On December 23, 2003, the first known case of mad cow disease ever discovered on U.S. soil was found in Washington State. The discovery sent a ripple effect across the country as U.S. ranchers watched in shock while our trading partners closed their doors to U.S. beef exports.

An investigation was conducted and DNA tests confirmed that this cow likely originated in a herd from Alberta, Canada, but this was little consolation to consumers here and abroad who immediately began to question whether U.S. beef was safe to eat.

While the exact cause of infection could not be confirmed, it is widely accepted by the science community that this cow became infected while eating contaminated feed before Canada had implemented its 1997 ruminant-to-ruminant feed ban.

The Department of Health and Human Services, Food and Drug Administration and U.S. Department of Agriculture responded by announcing a number of new rules to strengthen protections over the human food. Most importantly, USDA and FDA banned specified risk materials, such as brain and central nervous system tissues from entering the human food supply. These materials have been shown to present the greatest risk of transmitting mad cow disease through cattle herds and to humans.

Unfortunately, FDA failed to stand firm on its stated commitment to close four specific loopholes in feed regulations, measures that Acting FDA Commissioner Crawford made a commitment to do on January 26, 2004 and something that I believe was and is necessary to fully ensure the safety of U.S. beef.

As we know, feeding ruminant parts back to ruminants represents one of the greatest risks of spreading mad cow disease and that's why the U.S., like Canada, implemented a rule to ban this practice in 1997. But existing feed loopholes, such as the poultry litter loophole and plate waste loophole allow for the possibility of ruminant materials to find their way into ruminant feed through cross contamination.

To address this possibility, I introduced legislation during the 108th Congress, entitled the Animal Feed Protection Act, which would ban these materials from being used in any animal feed. This is important legislation that will strengthen existing feed rules to help mitigate the chance of cross contamination and ensure that ruminant materials are not accidentally fed to cattle.

Although my legislation did not pass last year, I plan to reintroduce the Animal Feed Protection Act for consideration during the 109th Congress next week. U.S. beef is arguably the safest in the world, but even so, critical export markets including Japan and South Korea still remain closed to U.S. beef exports. It is imperative that we do everything possible to prove to consumers abroad that the measures we

have in place to prevent further cases of mad cow are robust and comprehensive.

It was reassuring to hear Governor Johanns state, during his nomination hearing, that working to regain exports to Japan's market is priority number one for the U.S. beef industry.

As I know the Governor understands, access to these markets is the key to bringing prosperity back to U.S. cattle producers, feeders, processors and beef packers. No one understands the importance of the Japanese and South Korean markets better than the ranchers in Washington state, who exported nearly \$250 million of Washington beef to these markets in 2003. It is hard to overstate the extent to which Washington ranchers and the U.S. beef industry at large continue to suffer from the loss of these exports.

Although progress has been made, recent discoveries of mad cow in Canada could present a major setback to our ongoing negotiations with Japan and South Korea if it is determined that the risk of mad cow in Canada has not been adequately addressed.

Canada's discoveries of mad cow on January 2 and January 11 came just days after USDA announced a rule recognizing Canada as a minimal-risk region with regard to the mad cow disease.

The USDA defends this decision by citing the results of a risk analysis that the agency conducted in 2004. That analysis examined the reliability and adequacy of Canada's mad cow firewalls in eradicating this disease in its herds. The agency's analysis determined that Canada had a robust and comprehensive system in place to address all of the necessary risks of transmitting mad cow disease and had implemented proper safeguards to ensure the safety of its beef.

Thus, the USDA published a minimal risk rule in the January 4, 2005 Federal Register. That rule will authorize the reopening of our border to the importation of Canadian live cattle under the age of 30 months and other beef products from cattle over the age of 30 months beginning on March 7 of this year.

However, Canada's latest discovery of mad cow on January 11 has raised serious questions regarding the possibility of non-compliance of feed regulations in Canada and questions as to the reliability of Canada's system to enforce its mad cow firewalls. Because the cow was determined to be less than seven years of age and thus was born after Canada implemented its 1997 ruminant-to-ruminant feed ban, many have speculated that non-compliance of feed rules represents the most likely source of this infection.

In responding to this discovery, Administrator Ron DeHaven of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, APHIS, announced that the agency would expedite sending a technical team to Canada to investigate the circumstances surrounding these recent discoveries.

Last Friday, I sent a letter to Secretary Veneman and Governor Johanns requesting that this audit being conducted by APHIS inspectors be given time for a full and fair analysis. I think it is prudent for the USDA to provide the time and resources necessary to reach a determination as to the safety of Canadian beef before we reopen our border to its importation.

I believe that USDA must reevaluate reopening the border should serious non-compliance of feed regulations or lapses in Canada's enforcement of mad cow firewalls be uncovered.

Reestablishing the once dominant global market share enjoyed by U.S. beef producers is ultimately about product reliability and consumer confidence.

It is vital that we address Canadian safety issues now, so that we can prevent running the risk of importing potentially unsafe products. While I understand that reopening the border is important to the Canadian beef industry, our primary responsibility is to ensure the safety of our food supply here at home.

As world markets continue to converge becoming more and more interdependent, securing our domestic food supply requires much more work than it once did. We have an opportunity to aid our consumers by implementing mandatory country of origin labeling.

I believe such labeling is important for two major reasons—first, the security of our food supply; and second, the American consumer's right-to-know where their food was produced.

In 2002, I joined with my Senate colleagues in support of the farm bill, which, among other things, required that the USDA implement mandatory country of origin labeling standards by 2004. These provisions were supported by a wide margin of members in Congress, receiving nearly two-thirds support in the House. Even so, some who have fought the implementation of mandatory country of origin labeling every step of the way.

Last year, Congress decided to push back the date of implementation of mandatory labeling until September 2006 on all goods except for fish and shellfish. The justification was that we needed to "reconsider" its economic implications.

While I understand that labeling will come with increased costs, I believe that a failure to establish full accountability as to where our food is coming from could end up costing our consumers, businesses and government far more, should tainted beef or other unsafe products enter our food supply.

Whether in the case of an outbreak of mad cow or a biological terrorist plot that infects food imported into our country, we need to have a definite and immediate system to target the source of our food and, if necessary, provide the American people a clear way to identify the food and stop consumption.

The expansion of international agricultural trade has exponentially increased the options available to Americans as they peruse the shelves at their local grocery store. Imported foods are grown in widely varying conditions around the world, often in countries with drastically different regulatory contexts that allow the utilization of pesticides and growing practices which are banned here in the U.S.

As I previously stated, I support labeling for the benefits that it will bring to ensuring safety, but also because I believe that American consumers have the right to know where their food comes from. We have no control over the methods utilized by other countries to produce their goods, but we can control whether or not foreign products maintain the information necessary for American consumers to make an informed decision.

American consumers must be able to assess information on imported products to determine whether it is important to them.

Today, consumers are increasingly faced with the daunting task of sifting through vast amounts of packaging and labeling to obtain the information most critical to them.

Americans, for too long, have been knowingly exposed to foreign products without being provided with adequate information.

The issue of labeling our agricultural products, including beef, comes down to this: Do we want consumers to have confidence—and do we want consumers to have choice? Even though public opinion surveys show that U.S. consumers want to buy American products, those consumers don't always have the information necessary to make that choice.

I know that most consumers from my State would much rather buy and consume U.S. beef. This is because it is important to them that they are able to rely on the quality of the product and the safety of methods used in its production.

It is important to Washingtonians that the beef they purchase comes from a cow that was fed under American standards for feed safety—beef that had to be processed under strong American standards and beef that has met a set of standards that allows consumers to feel confident of its safety and its quality.

Some will argue that we already use USDA labels to indicate whether beef is produced in the U.S. however, the grade label from the USDA, which a lot of consumers might think means that beef was American made, is often stamped on packages that contain imported beef mixed in with just a small percentage of American beef.

Under the Federal Meat Inspection Act, cattle and other bulk or non-processed products must be clearly labeled as to their country of origin. However, once those products are brought into the U.S. and value-added processing occurs, the law does not mandate that in-

formation indicating the country of origin be included on the final products that ultimately reach the consumer.

This is an important issue that Congress must address.

Families sitting at the dinner table should not have to wonder about what went into the food they eat. They should be provided the information to know what they are consuming. To put it simply, consumers deserve better accountability.

Cattlemen in Washington State are proud of the beef they raise and are willing to trust their livelihood to the choices made by informed American consumers.

The USDA stamp should represent the quality and safety of American products—not a mark that in some instances will mislead consumers into just thinking that they are buying American quality. A product's country of origin should be information that is included all of the way from the border to the store shelf.

Last fall, Craig Grub, a Medical Lake rancher said: "Consumers deserve to be able to make an educated choice. They should have implemented Mandatory labeling years ago." Producers like Mr. Grub support mandatory country of origin labeling because they understand and appreciate the importance of food safety and consumer choice in America.

Regardless of whether we work through the legislative or rulemaking processes, I believe that the implementation of a greater standard of accountability over imported products is imperative to better ensure food safety for our consumers here at home.

There is a lot of work that remains in order for this country to achieve this goal and I am confident that Governor Johanns is committed to working to this end. I will vote in support of his nomination. I am eager to begin working with him on reopening Asian markets to U.S. beef as well as to collaborate and promote opportunities for all U.S. agricultural products abroad.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I rise in support of the nomination of Governor Johanns to be Secretary of Agriculture. I very much look forward to working with him on issues of importance to Colorado's rural communities—its ranchers, farmers, agribusinesses and consumers.

I also look forward to putting into action my own experience as a farmer and rancher and learning from the experience and leadership of the Governor from Nebraska, a neighboring State that is struggling with many of the same challenges that Colorado faces.

I anticipate that Governor Johanns will be confirmed today, and that is as it should be because he has a lot of work waiting for him.

I fear that many in the country do not recognize the challenges facing farmers, ranchers and rural towns in Colorado and across America today. Farming, ranching and agri-related

businesses play a vital role to rural communities, and it is the job of the Senate Agriculture Committee and the United States Department of Agriculture to help those communities preserve this way of life and ensure that it will sustain many more generations of families. Governor Johanns has assured me that he understands this and that as Secretary of Agriculture he will rise to meet this challenge.

One of the first important challenges that Governor Johanns will have to address is the issue of mad cow disease and the Canadian border. The Governor must direct the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the Food Safety Inspection Service, as well as work with the Food and Drug Administration to thoroughly examine and fully understand the implications that reopening the border to Canadian live cattle will have on farmers, ranchers, consumers and agricultural organizations and industries across the U.S.

In addition, the Governor will have the challenge of reviewing the testimony and comments of farmers and ranchers, consumers and other agricultural industries and organizations whose livelihoods and families will be directly impacted by USDA's decision. I look forward to the Governor and USDA's review of each of these items and, as a member of the Agriculture Committee, will enjoy our further discussions on their findings and final decision.

Furthermore, this ongoing mad cow issue underscores another challenge for Governor Johanns as well as a matter of vital importance: country-of-origin labeling, COOL. American consumers have the right to know where their food is coming from, and I think that common sense dictates that if we can label where our shirts and socks are made, we can surely label where our meat and food comes from. I hope that Governor Johanns will work with us to ensure that COOL will go ahead once and for all, as passed by law.

During Governor Johanns' nomination hearing in the Senate Agriculture Committee, he spoke about the need to encourage and explore biotech opportunities, open new markets, and provide expanded opportunities for productivity in agriculture. Important value-added initiatives such as these will be an essential factor to ensure a viable future for rural areas.

Toward that end, early next month the President will release his budget for the upcoming fiscal year. That will provide a good indicator of his priorities for rural residents across the country. In last year's budget, the administration cut funding for rural development and eliminated or severely limited funding for programs to get rural communities broadband access, promote rural investment and help rural firefighters. Knowing of the Governor's commitment to expand opportunities for rural communities, I look forward to his help in protecting important programs such as these.

Earlier this week, I also received written answers to questions I had submitted to Governor Johanns. While I certainly appreciate Governor Johanns' timely reply, I also look forward to hearing more detailed answers on the questions that he did not respond to, including an important issue to Colorado that has to do with a proposed development at the base of a ski area at Wolf Creek Pass.

The Governor also spoke of the importance of the spirit of cooperation. I agree that we must cooperate to provide our rural residents with increased rural development and sustainable agricultural opportunities as well as reasonable commodity supports and eligibility guidelines to ensure that federal supports go to the family farmers who are the intended beneficiaries. Part and parcel of protecting our family farmer and rancher is ending the monopolization of the meatpacking industry and helping small, family agri-businesses to compete.

Our family farmers, ranchers, and rural business people deserve fair farm, rural development and conservation programs as well as a safe food supply and other policies that help create more successful communities.

I send my thanks to Governor Johanns for his service to Nebraska and his willingness to serve the Federal Government, and I look forward to working with him on these important issues.

(At the request of Mr. REED, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

• Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I support the confirmation of Mike Johanns to be Secretary of Agriculture and look forward to working with him in my capacity as the ranking member of the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee. We will have occasion to work together on many different topics in the months to come.

One topic of particular interest to me is the Milk Income Loss Contract, MILC, program. This counter-cyclical support program was included in the 2002 farm bill and provides critical safety net for America's dairymen.

In 2002 and the first half of 2003, dairy prices reached 25-year lows. During that time, the MILC program provided dairy producers with much, needed assistance. It helped to preserve the productive capacity of Wisconsin's dairy farms and stemmed the tide of losses that dairy farmers had experienced in previous periods of price downturn.

Unfortunately, the MILC program is scheduled to expire in September 2005, 2 years earlier than the rest of the farm bill commodity programs. I believe that is unacceptable and will be joining soon with a bipartisan, multi-regional coalition of Senate colleagues to introduce legislation that would extend the MILC program.

I ask unanimous consent that a letter that several of my colleagues and I recently sent to the President on this topic be printed in the RECORD. I look

forward to working with Secretary Johanns on this issue in the months to come.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, January 10, 2005.

The PRESIDENT,
The White House,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: We are writing to commend your strong statements during the Presidential Campaign in support of the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) program. Your pledge to work toward reauthorization so that "dairy farmers all across this country can count on the support they need," is critical.

Under current law the MILC program is set to expire at end of September of 2005, two years prior to other farm bill programs. We are seeking a two-year extension of MILC to bring it in line with other agriculture support programs. To allow MILC's expiration would eliminate a critical safety net for dairy farmers at a time when milk prices are on the decline.

We greatly appreciate your expression of support for extension of the MILC program and look forward to seeing that commitment reflected in your Fiscal Year 2006 budget. We hope to work closely with your Administration in active support of the MILC extension legislation in the coming months.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

ARLEN SPECTER,
MARK DAYTON,
HERB KOHL,
PATRICK J. LEAHY,
U.S. Senators.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I urge my Senate colleagues to support the President's nomination of Governor Michael Johanns of Nebraska to serve as the Secretary of Agriculture.

Governor Johanns is extraordinarily well-prepared and qualified for this new challenge. He grew up on a dairy farm in Iowa. He has served two terms as Mayor of Lincoln, NE, and is in his second term as Governor of that State. He has shown outstanding leadership during his tenure as Governor which will serve him well in managing the diverse and important activities of the Department of Agriculture.

As leader of a major agriculture state, the Governor is obviously familiar with the issues that are important to farmers and ranchers. He has been a leader in the Western Governors' Association on drought issues and has led five trade missions to expand overseas markets for American agricultural products.

He has also been a leader on other issues that are critical to the very diverse mission of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He has been a strong voice for rural economic development. He is a past Chairman of the Governors' Ethanol Coalition and knows the potential of value-added agriculture. He serves as Chairman of the Governors' Biotechnology Partnership and has fostered electronic-government and technology applications in his state.

Mr. President, on January 6th Governor Johanns appeared for his nomi-

nation hearing before the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, which I have the privilege to chair. For nearly 3 hours he answered questions on a wide range of subjects and made a clear and positive impression on the entire Committee. His compassion and understanding of the issues was so evident that Committee members voted to approve his nomination that same day by a unanimous 20 to 0 vote.

Mr. President, I congratulate the President on his choice to lead the Department of Agriculture for the next 4 years. I appreciate Governor Johanns' commitment to continue an outstanding record of public service and I recommend to my colleagues that they all support his nomination.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I strongly support the confirmation of Margaret Spellings as the eighth Secretary of Education. Ms. Spellings is a longtime public servant who for the past 4 years has served as President Bush's chief domestic policy adviser. In her White House efforts, she has helped implement policies on education, health, labor and housing. Her familiarity with America's students and teachers will prove invaluable in her new role managing our public educational system.

Ms. Spellings also assisted President Bush when he was Governor of our home State of Texas, where they worked together on a number of important education programs including the Texas Reading Initiative to improve literacy, the Student Success Initiative to eliminate social promotion, and the State's accountability standard which is the forerunner to the No Child Left Behind Act. Because of her educational accomplishments, each year the United States develops more qualified teachers, better facilities and superior resources.

A veteran of the Texas Association of School Boards, Ms. Spellings knows firsthand the advantages afforded by education and has pledged to ensure every child acquires the skills necessary to realize the American Dream. I am proud to support her in that effort, and to support her confirmation so she may continue her important work.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I rise today in strong support of the confirmation of Mike Johanns to be Secretary of Agriculture. As the former Governor of Nebraska, Mike Johanns knows how important agriculture is to this country. Through his dedicated public service he has shown a great understanding of the complex nature of the industry and the problems facing it.

Growing up on an Iowa dairy farm, Mike Johanns learned from an early age that agriculture is the backbone of this great nation. For over two centuries, hardworking men and women like Mr. Johanns have dedicated their lives to protecting the vitality of the food and fiber industry. The nomination of Mike Johanns for the position

of Secretary of Agriculture is a tribute to his commitment, and I have no doubt that this commitment will bring distinction to the position of Secretary of Agriculture.

Throughout his professional career, Mike Johanns has been committed to the wellbeing of America's farmers and ranchers. As Governor, Mr. Johanns emphasized the importance of value-added agriculture, renewable fuels such as ethanol, and job creation in rural areas. Additionally, Mr. Johanns has demonstrated a keen knowledge of international trade policy, a subject that will continue to increase in importance as the world moves towards a more globalized economy. I look forward to working with Mr. Johanns to ensure that future trade agreements with the food and fiber industry are treated equitably.

Mr. Johanns has also been an important leader on drought policy, a subject that is very important to many communities in the west. I believe that with his experience in this area, the country can move forward in establishing a concrete and coherent drought policy that provides tangible benefits for those affected by this serious problem.

I know that Mr. Johanns will serve the agriculture community the utmost integrity and fairness and I look forward to working with him in the future.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, it is with great pleasure that I rise to support the nomination of Governor Mike Johanns to lead the Department of Agriculture. I applaud the President for his outstanding choice. The Nebraska Governor enjoys strong support from both sides of the aisle, including from his two home State Senators, CHUCK HAGEL and BEN NELSON. The Governor's nomination was approved unanimously in committee and I expect swift action on his confirmation today.

Governor Johann's story starts in Mitchell County, IA, on his family's dairy farm. Long hours working on the farm taught him the demands of the business, the hard work, discipline and resiliency it takes to succeed in agriculture. It also taught him a deep respect for the land and a sturdy work ethic which he says defines him to this day.

As Governor of Nebraska, Mr. Johanns has been a true friend of America's farmers and ranchers. He has traveled the world to open new markets. Nebraska is the largest beef processing state in the country and the fourth largest exporter of agricultural products. Under Governor Johanns' leadership, Nebraska's exports to China have more than doubled, from \$51 million dollars in 1999 to \$110 million in 2003.

He has also been a tireless advocate for his State's agricultural workers. As Governor, he developed the Meatpackers Bill or Rights to protect the mostly Hispanic work force from

poor working conditions. It was a controversial bill, but the Governor was determined to stand up for the right of his workers to safe working conditions. As he put it, "people have a right to a safe work environment whether they earn five or fifty dollars per hour."

As Secretary of Agriculture, he will continue to grow and strengthen our farm economy. There will be challenges, including protecting the food supply, and developing alternative energy sources like ethanol. But Governor Johanns' lifetime of experience and leadership makes him superbly and uniquely qualified to meet these challenges.

Governor Johanns says his father cried when he learned that his son was going to become a lawyer instead of a farmer. I hope today is cause for celebration.

I look forward to the swift confirmation of Governor Johanns, and I look forward to working with him to keep America moving forward.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I know of no other speakers on either side.

I ask that all time be yielded on the nomination of Governor Johanns for Secretary of Agriculture.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. All time is yielded.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Mike Johanns, of Nebraska, to be Secretary of Agriculture?

The nomination was confirmed.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. ROBERTS. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

THE NOMINATION OF MARGARET SPELLINGS TO BE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Margaret Spellings, of Texas, to be Secretary of Education.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I rise today to bring before the Senate the nomination of Margaret Spellings to be the Secretary of Education.

On January 6, the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions held a hearing to review the qualifications of Ms. Spellings for the position. As chairman of the committee, I am pleased to note that the committee members found her qualifications to be exemplary and well suited to the Cabinet level position. She has been enthusiastic and well informed.

As the President's domestic policy adviser, Ms. Spellings was instrumental in developing the No Child Left Behind Act, and other important legislative initiatives.

Today I stand with Senator KENNEDY, the ranking member and the former chairman of the HELP Committee, in

bipartisan support of her nomination. I thank Senator KENNEDY and his staff for helping us bring this nomination to the floor in a very timely manner.

In addition, I am joined by Senator ALEXANDER, who will be the chair of the HELP Committee's Subcommittee on Education and Early Childhood Development.

We look forward to working with Ms. Spellings in her new position.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I congratulate my friend and colleague, Senator ENZI, on his appointment as the chairman of our committee. He is my favorite chairman to the year 2007. I thank him very much.

I am glad to withhold if the Senator desires. As always, he is very gracious, but I am glad to wait until he has completed his remarks. Then I intend to talk about education.

Mr. ENZI. I concluded my initial statement, and I will see if another is necessary.

I yield to the ranking member if he so desires.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I sincerely look forward to working with my friend from Wyoming. We had a great tribute the other evening from various education groups. Senator ENZI met with more than 95 different groups, and in his typical fashion said he was willing to sit down and listen to each and every group. It was a bold action on his part. It is a clear indication he is going to be an active leader in the field of education as he has been in so many other areas of our committee.

I join with him in the strong support of Margaret Spellings to serve as the Secretary of Education.

There is no more important position in a President's cabinet. And I believe that Margaret Spellings has the knowledge, commitment, and leadership to improve the quality of education across our land.

The strength of America depends on the strength of our public schools.

Education is the key to opportunity and a strong economy. Our schools and teachers prepare young Americans to compete and succeed in an ever-changing economy.

Education is key to our national security. We cannot protect America and maintain our progress in the world without skilled and well-trained citizens.

Education is the key to good citizenship. Good schools can shape the character of our citizens and train Americans to participate in our democracy, to serve our country and our communities.

In short, our schools are key to the American dream.

From our earliest days as a Nation, our country's founders understood this. John Adams, in drafting the Massachusetts constitution in 1780, affirmed that education of the people was "necessary for the preservation of their rights and